

**LEFT VENTRICULAR CONDUIT WITH BLOOD VESSEL GRAFT**Cross-Reference to Related Application

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~~This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/099,719, filed September 10, 1998.~~

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to apparatus and method for implanting a conduit to allow communication of fluids from one portion of a patient's body to another; and, more particularly, to a blood flow conduit to allow communication from a heart chamber to a vessel or vice versa, and/or vessel to vessel. Even more particularly, the invention relates to a left ventricular conduit and related conduit configurations having a blood vessel graft incorporated therein for controlling the flow of blood through the conduit to achieve bypass of an occluded or stenosed coronary artery.

Background of the Invention

Coronary artery disease is a major problem in the U.S. and throughout the world. Coronary arteries as well as other blood vessels frequently become clogged with plaque which, at the very least, can reduce blood and oxygen flow to the heart muscle (myocardium), and may impair the efficiency of the heart's pumping action, and can lead to heart attack (myocardial infarction) and death. In some cases, these coronary arteries can be unblocked through noninvasive techniques such as balloon angioplasty. In more difficult cases, a surgical bypass of the blocked vessel is necessary.

In a coronary bypass operation, one or more venous segments are inserted between the aorta and the coronary artery, or, alternatively, the distal end of an internal mammary artery is anastomosed to the coronary artery at a site distal to the stenosis or occlusion. The inserted venous segments or transplants act as a bypass of the blocked portion of the coronary artery and thus provide for a free or unobstructed flow of blood to the heart. More than 500,000 bypass procedures are performed in the U.S. every year.

Such coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery, however, is a very intrusive procedure which is expensive, time-consuming, and traumatic to the patient. The operation requires an incision through the patient's sternum (sternotomy), and that the patient be placed on a heart-lung bypass pump so that the heart can be operated on while not beating. A saphenous vein graft is harvested from the patient's leg, another highly